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Brussels – boss, bully or the big brother? Framing CONFLICT in contemporary Hungarian political rhetoric*

According to political realism, conflict is an immanent feature of world politics (Morgenthau 1948/1973). Drawing on this basic premise, it can be expected that the CONFLICT frame is routinely exploited by politicians to explain and justify their foreign policy (Musolff 2016). Conflict is especially prevalent in populist narratives, where the “pure people” are juxtaposed with the “corrupt elite” (Mudde 2004). Accordingly, we hypothesized that the current Hungarian populist government would also frame its turbulent relationship with the EU by metaphorically conceptualizing it as a violent conflict. Drawing on a discourse dynamics approach to metaphor identification (Cameron et al. 2009; 2010), we analysed the metaphorical framing of the term *Brüsszel* (‘Brussels’) found in articles published on official government websites between 2015 and 2017. Our results indicate that explicit manifestation of the CONFLICT frame in the form of violent conflict (such as a military operation) is less prevalent in contemporary government rhetoric, as opposed to the EU AS PERSON frame. This latter conceptualization, however, is manifested by metaphorical scenarios that evoke conflictual relations with varying degrees (and thus feed into populist narratives) by making sense of the EU as an authority figure, a partner in a joint venture, a bully, and an opponent in a battle.

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1. Introduction

On 12 April 2003, Hungary held its referendum on its accession to the European Union (EU); 83.76% of the voters approved the membership.¹ Enthusiasm for the EU was also reflected in the attitude of the political parties, which, regardless of their ideology, fully supported Hungary's EU membership, which eventually came into effect on 1 May 2004 (Fölsz & Tóka 2006; Dúró 2017). This positive stance has changed considerably over time; current attitudes toward the EU are definitely more ambiguous. For instance, the 2018 Eurobarometer survey recorded a mere 48% trust for the European Union among the Hungarian population. On a political level, EU and Hungary relations have also been turbulent in the past few years, due to a number of conflicts relating to economic, societal, and political issues (such as the privatisation of the private pension funds or the recent refugee problem).² EU–Hungary tensions have surfaced in governmental communication as well: research indicates that governmental communication has been adopting a clear “Them” (the EU) *versus* “Us” (Hungary) conceptualization in official communication since 2014 (Koller 2017).

Yet *how* exactly – i.e., with what *linguistic means* – does the Hungarian government frame its relationship with the EU? The question is all the more relevant in light of the fact that political realism takes conflict in politics as granted (Morgenthau 1948/1973). Drawing on this basic premise, it can be expected that the CONFLICT frame – particularly in the form of a violent conflict, such as a military operation or even war – is routinely exploited by politicians to explain and justify their foreign policy (Musolff 2016). The ubiquity of framing political conflict as war has been widely researched both in communication theory (e.g., Semetko & Valkenburg 2000) and in conceptual metaphor theory (e.g., Lakoff 1991; Mio 1997; Musolff 2016); research in both fields has implied that the use of the CONFLICT frame rests on generic conceptualizations and is widely applied across cultures. Its application is especially prevalent in populist narratives, where the “pure people” are juxtaposed with the “corrupt elite” (Mudde 2004). Building on the assumption that conflict is thus a staple element of political communication in general and populist

¹ Retrieved from: <https://valtor.valasztas.hu/valtort/jsp/orszjkv.jsp?EA=20&W=9>. Accessed: 25 September 2020.

² For a detailed account of the EU–Hungary relationship, see Arató & Koller (2015).



discourse in particular, the aim of the present paper is to shed light on how the ruling Hungarian populist government communicates about the EU, when referring to – metaphorically and metonymically speaking – the very seat and heart of the European Union, i.e., Brussels. The Central Eastern European region has a rather unique attitude towards the EU in the sense that even though these countries “are among the most pro-EU publics on the continent, they vote for some of the most Eurosceptical governments. These governments, in turn, *use Brussels as a rhetorical punching bag* while benefitting from its financial largess” (Krastev 2018: 52; cited in Csehi & Zigut 2020: 2; emphasis ours). Keeping in mind that Central and Eastern Europe is still considered as an under-researched area in populism studies (Csehi & Zigut 2020), the paper aims to fill in some gaps with regard to the link between metaphorical framing and populist discourse.

In what follows, Section 2 outlines the political context that has led to a strained relationship between Hungary and the European Union. Section 3 discusses the significance of metaphorical framing in political communication, while Section 4 outlines the methodology and corpus selection. Section 5 discusses the data. Finally, Section 6 concludes by outlining the main findings of the paper.

2. The European Union and Hungary – the bigger context

Hungary submitted its application for membership on 1 April 1994 in Athens and joined the EU ten years later. During the years leading to the country’s full membership, Hungary was considered as one of the forerunners of accession among the former communist states (Human Rights Watch 2002; Tuka 2009; Buzogány 2017). As noted above, Hungary’s entry to the European Union was widely supported by both the public and the political parties, regardless of the parties’ political ideology (Fölsz & Tóka 2006). Eventually, with the support of 83.76% of the votes, Hungary joined the EU on 1 May 2004. However, the initial positive attitude towards the European Union changed over the following years due to a number of reasons (and heavily politicized topics). It is not our aim here to discuss in detail how exactly the EU–Hungary relationship shifted (as this is not the main focus of the paper). In the following we will provide a select overview of some of the major issues that surfaced during the time frame leading up to the tensions between 2015 and 2017 – and which period falls under scrutiny in the present research.

One of the major conflicts between the Hungarian government and the EU surfaced in the summer of 2010, when the EU did not allow Hungary to extend the budget deficit (Benczes 2016; Csaba 2019). In 2011, when Hungary fulfilled the



presidency of the Council of the EU, further disagreements arose, especially around the new Hungarian media law, which curtailed free press and the media (Human Rights Watch 2015; cf. Bayer 2011), and the newly accepted constitution. The introduction of the new Fundamental Law sparked heavy international criticism (also from outside the EU, such as the United Nations), due to its failure to maintain a sufficient level of checks and balances between the legislative and executive powers and for curbing the power of the Constitutional Court. The document was also criticized for the lack of public debate before its adoption (note that even the Hungarian Parliament was given merely a month to formulate its opinion; Scheppele 2015).

Tensions between the European Union and Hungary manifested in government rhetoric as well. According to Koller (2017: 172), a significant turn in this respect can be detected in the 2014 EU parliamentary campaign, in which the main message was to determine Hungary as “Us”, as opposed to the EU, which was framed as “Them”. This “Us” *versus* “Them” attitude came to the forefront in the billboard campaign that the government initiated in 2014, which ran with the following message: “This is the message we’re sending to Brussels: More respect for Hungarians!” This alienation was further exacerbated by the subsequent refugee problem that reached its peak in Hungary in the summer and autumn of 2015 (Bocskor 2018; Benczes 2019), after which Hungary initiated its referendum on migration in 2016.

3. Metaphorical framing and political communication

Frames have made their appearance in a host of disciplines, including artificial intelligence (Minsky 1975), psychology (Kahneman & Tversky 1984), semantics (Fillmore 1982/2006) cognitive linguistics (Lakoff 1986), or communication theory (Entman 1993). While the focus on – and the exact definition of – what a frame is does differ across disciplines, the fundamental characteristic of a frame as a means of structuring and organizing the world around us via stable cognitive representations can be regarded as a common feature. Thus, acting as “a portion of background information” (Semino et al. 2016: 1), frames a) are focused on a particular aspect of the world; b) generate expectations and inferences; and c) are also typically linked with specific lexical choices (Semino et al. 2016). Frames are thus very much embedded in language use (Fillmore 1982/2006; Kövecses 2006; Semino et al. 2016) – what words we use to describe a particular situation can evoke alternative frames (i.e., different interpretations) and accordingly result in alternative assumptions (i.e., prompt different reactions).



In this paper we focus on metaphorical framing specifically, since metaphors have been considered as “prototypical initiators of framing” (Krippendorff 2017: 97). Accordingly, the choice of one specific metaphor in communication over another may influence the way we perceive a specific issue (Thibodeau & Boroditsky 2011). By way of illustration, Lakoff (2014: 1–2) analyses the framing of taxation by the administration of George W. Bush. Under Bush’s presidency, the White House started communicating about a *tax relief*, based on the conceptual metaphor TAXATION IS AN AFFLICTION (Lakoff 2014). The metaphorical expression *tax relief* evoked a frame consisting of elements as the affliction itself, the act of relieving someone from affliction and the parties involved. Hence, the TAX RELIEF frame ensured that taxation was viewed from a particular viewpoint, one that regarded taxation as negative and tax cuts as necessary (Lakoff 2014).

The example of *tax relief* not only demonstrates the significance of metaphors in framing in general but also highlights one of the areas that has received special attention in cognitive linguistic research: political communication. Although cognitive linguistic studies have relied on metaphorical framing as a tool to analyse the way we conceptualise topics related to health (Semino et al. 2016; Brdar & Brdar-Szabó herein), finance (López & Lopis 2010; Benczes & Benczes 2018) and society (Burgers et al. 2016), metaphorical framing has possibly been the most extensively utilized in the examination of political discourse (cf. Lakoff 2002; Musolff 2016; Burgers et al. 2019; Musolff herein). Metaphorical framing is relevant to political communication on multiple levels. Firstly, political actors regularly adopt metaphors to support their arguments (Charteris-Black 2018), as, for instance, former British prime minister Harold Macmillan referred to the independence movements of former British colonies as the “wind of change” (Charteris-Black 2018: 250). Metaphorical frames also ensure that complex areas of politics, such as economic processes or legal issues, can be presented to the public in a comprehensible manner (Mio 1997; Musolff 2016; Charteris-Black 2018). This aspect of metaphorical framing is crucial because understanding specific processes of politics, as the above discussed taxation system, would require expert knowledge. However, the use of metaphorical language makes these issues accessible to laypeople as well (cf. Musolff 2016; Charteris-Black 2018).

These aspects of metaphorical frames are relevant to the political rhetoric of the current Hungarian government as well. Framing the relationship between Hungary and the EU through metaphors facilitates the interpretation of the complex functioning of the European Union and its authorities over the member states in a more simplex manner. Moreover, metaphorical framing enables the Hungarian government to present the EU–Hungary relationship in a light that is favourable for the



government and is in line with its populist policies (and narratives) (Csehi & Zigut 2020). Thus, it can be reasonably hypothesised that the Hungarian government also relies primarily on the CONFLICT frame to conceptualize its relationship with the European Union.

Given Hungary's turbulent and rather ambivalent relationship to the EU (see Section 2 above), it can also be expected that the CONFLICT frame is manifested in governmental communication in the form of a violent conflict, i.e., WAR. Needless to say, the latter conceptualization has been widely applied in the field of political metaphors. In fact, it has appeared in several forms and in numerous contexts in the course of history (Lakoff 1991; Mio 1997; Musolff 2016). One of the most widely cited examples of politics as war is the "War on Terror"; its emergence can be connected to the terrorist attack against the United States on 11 September 2001, after which the US president, George W. Bush, used this expression to sum up the foreign policy of the US. The framing of the war against Iraq as such was so powerful that it was adopted by the media largely without any criticism, which resulted in the justification and legitimization of the invasion of Iraq (Lewis & Reece 2009).³

Political discourse thus relies on metaphorical frames to communicate, justify, and legitimize policies (Lakoff 2002; Charteris-Black 2011). Yet metaphorical frames are often schematic – they become elaborated through discourse. Musolff (2016: 30) refers to these elaborations as "scenarios". In his definition, scenarios "are a less schematic subtype of frame insofar as they include specific narrative and evaluative perspectives, which make them attractive for drawing strong inferences in political discourses" (Musolff 2016: 30). Scenarios are thus different from frames in the sense that they are built upon the beliefs of communities, and involve prototypical elements such as participants, storylines – i.e., a narrative. If we wish to incorporate Musolff's views into our research, some adjustment needs to be made to the hypothesis of the present paper. It is thus expected that the current Hungarian government will frame its relationship with the EU through the metaphor of CONFLICT, which is manifested predominantly via the scenario of WAR.

³ Note that terrorism has not been the only issue that has been captured with the WAR domain in US politics. Lyndon B. Johnson's policies in the 1960s, which aimed to reduce poverty in the United States, were referred to as the "War on Poverty" (Zarefsky 2005). Later, under his presidency, Richard Nixon called for the "War on Drugs," which grew into an intensive campaign against drug use through the 1980s and the 1990s (Steuter & Wills 2008).



4. Methodology

The aim of our study was to explore the way the Hungarian government conceptualizes a single target domain, when referring to the very seat and heart of the European Union, i.e., Brussels. To do so, we selected one specific context, articles published on the official website of the Hungarian government⁴ and the Prime Minister's Office.⁵ In other words, we looked for metaphors in the *local* setting of governmental communication (cf. Stanojević 2019). Initially, our aim was to collect all the available texts from when Viktor Orbán's party, FIDESZ, first came into power in 2010 (note that FIDESZ is now in its third consecutive term as a ruling party, most recently winning the 2018 general elections with a two-thirds majority). However, we could not extract comparable datasets between 2010 and 2014 due to the very small sample sizes. Thus, we restricted our investigation to articles published between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2017, as these three consecutive years – 2015, 2016, and 2017 – provided adequate data. Following the extraction of all government communication from the investigated years, we then searched for the keyword *Brüsszel* ('Brussels') in the raw corpus. The reason why we selected *Brüsszel* as keyword, and not *Európai Unió* or *EU* (the Hungarian counterpart of *European Union* and *EU*, respectively) is that *Brüsszel* has become a conventionalised expression for the European Union⁶ through the CAPITAL FOR GOVERNMENT metonymy in Hungarian political discourse (cf. Brdar & Brdar-Szabó 2011; Csehi 2019: 1018). Note also that the ruling Hungarian party, FIDESZ, based its anti-immigration propaganda against the European Union in 2016 and 2017 by "addressing" its messages to *Brüsszel* (see Benczes 2019). As observed by Brdar and Brdar-Szabó (2011), the use of the CAPITAL FOR GOVERNMENT metonymy (i.e., the use of *Brüsszel* instead of *Európai Unió* in our case) implies (and entails) emotional attachment via the EMOTIONAL DISTANCE IS PHYSICAL DISTANCE metaphor and is thus well suited to carry emotionally heated messages that feed into populist propaganda.

We selected all the sentences in which we found the word *Brüsszel*. We did not take into consideration examples in which *Brüsszel* unequivocally referred to the city of Brussels (i.e., as a physical location). A representative example is provided in (1):

⁴ Available at: <http://www.kormany.hu>. Accessed: 25 September 2020.

⁵ Available at: <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu>. Accessed: 25 September 2020.

⁶ Note that the CAPITAL FOR GOVERNMENT metonymy involving Brussels and the European Union is not a unique phenomenon. For further details, see Musolf (2016: 8–9).



- (1) *A hét végén európai uniós csúcs lesz Brüsszelben* (2016)⁷
the week end.at European Union summit
will.be Brussels.in
'There will be a European Union summit in Brussels at the end of the week'

We also excluded examples where *Brüsszel* was used metonymically to refer to the people working in any one the EU's institutions (by way of the INSTITUTION FOR THE PEOPLE WORKING THERE metonymy), since the focus of the present paper is the *metaphorical* framing of the EU. Such cases are exemplified by (2).

- (2) *A konferenciánkon is elhangzott az a vélemény, hogy Brüsszelből sokan úgy állnak a közép-európai országokhoz, hogy „kaptok tőlünk pénzt, ezért ne nagyon szójatok bele abba, amit csinálunk”* (2015)
the conference.our.on also voiced that the opinion
that Brussels.from many so approach.they the Central European
countries.to that 'get.you us.from money, so not much
interfere.you in the.thing that do.we'
'The opinion was voiced at our conference that many people from Brussels have the 'you get money from us, so do not interfere very much in what we do' attitude towards Central European countries'

In sum, we identified 433 tokens (valid examples with the word *Brüsszel*) in the texts extracted between 2015 and 2017.⁸

We opted for a discourse dynamics approach to metaphor identification as our methodology (Cameron et al. 2009; 2010) – i.e., no metaphorical frames were set up in advance. We followed the steps of metaphor identification as proposed by Cameron et al. (2009; 2010). The process is illustrated by example (3):

- (3) *A kérdések olyan témákra vonatkoznak, amelyekben Magyarország vitája van Brüsszellel.* (2017)
the questions such topics related.to, about.which
Hungary debate has Brussels.with
'The questions relate to topics about which Hungary has an argument

⁷ The glossing of the examples will be kept relatively simple.

⁸ In numbers: 52 tokens from 2015; 210 tokens from 2016; and 171 tokens from 2017.



with Brussels’

Firstly, we identified linguistic metaphors, which can be both words and phrases. We marked *Magyarországnak vitája van Brüsszellel* ‘Hungary has an argument with Brussels’ as metaphorical on the basis that according to the *Concise Explanatory Dictionary of Hungarian* (CEDH; Pusztai 2011), *vita* ‘argument’ can unfold only between persons but not institutions or collectives (as in this case *Hungary* metonymically stands for the Hungarian people/government and Brussels stands for the EU). The discourse dynamic approach locates metaphor vehicles⁹ first, such as *has an argument with*. The metaphor vehicles are then grouped together based on the semantics of their basic meaning; accordingly, *has an argument with* constituted the same group as the highlighted items in examples (4) and (5) (‘accord’ and ‘standpoint’, respectively):

- (4) *nincs összhang Budapest és Brüsszel között* (2017)
 there.is.no accord Budapest and Brussels between
 ‘there is no accord between Budapest and Brussels’
- (5) *nem fogadjuk el Brüsszel álláspontját* (2016)
 no accept.we Brussels’ standpoint
 ‘we do not accept Brussel’s standpoint’

Each of these vehicle terms imply that there is a difference of opinion between the two parties, i.e., Hungary/Budapest and Brussels. Cameron et al. (2009; 2010) recommend that vehicles should be labelled with the least possible generalization from the word or phrase which appears in the data. Therefore, we selected the OP-
 PONENT IN AN ARGUMENT label for the examples which include words or phrases explicitly stating that there is an argument between Hungary/Budapest and Brussels. It must be added that these groupings are created along the notion of “principled flexibility,” i.e., the sets of groupings are subject to change as the researchers work through the whole corpus (Cameron et al. 2009; 2010).

5. Results and discussion

5.1. Major metaphorical frames

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the major metaphorical frames we have identified.

⁹ Under CMT, vehicle terms are referred to as “source domains”.

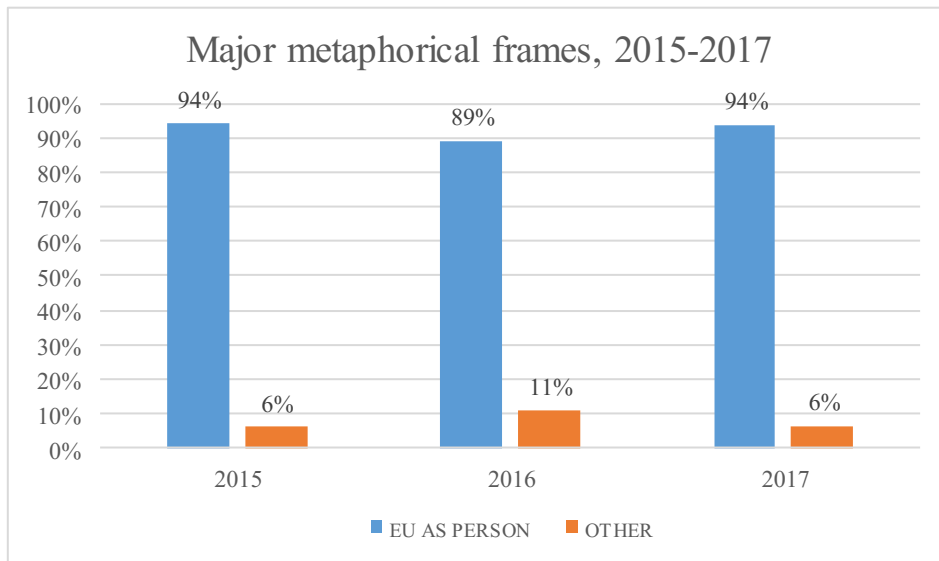


Figure 1. Distribution of major metaphorical frames, 2015–2017

As can be seen from Figure 1, The EU AS PERSON emerged as the most frequent metaphorical conceptualization in our data, accounting for approximately 90% of the tokens in the corpus for each investigated year.¹⁰ This result is by no means surprising; political communication often relies on the use of metaphors that conceptualise a political entity, such as a nation, as a person (cf. Stanojević & Šarić 2019 for a recent overview on the NATION AS PERSON metaphor). According to Charteris-Black (2011: 61), depicting a political establishment, such as the European Union as a person, has significant persuasive power, because “it evokes our attitudes, feelings and beliefs about people and applies them to our attitudes, feelings and beliefs about abstract political entities”. Personification thus provides direct emotional attachment to an otherwise abstract entity (Šarić 2015; Demata 2019). Hence, reducing (and simplifying) the complex institution of the European Union to a single person with its own idiosyncratic features, who can be held accountable for its actions, can make it easier to get a particular message across (Semino 2008).

The PERSON metaphor can be organized into units of human society, such as FAMILY, as in the case of the NATION AS FAMILY metaphor (Kövecses 2017). In the

¹⁰ We also managed to establish a number of varied metaphorical conceptualizations that had a relatively low distribution in the investigated period, including the conceptualization of the EU via an image schematic FORCE frame, or via a MACHINE or PUZZLE metaphor. These frames have been grouped under the category of “Other” in Figure 1 (and due to their low occurrences will not be discussed in detail in the present article).



context of politics, this metaphor is typically built on models that originate in either parent – child relations (as discussed by Lakoff 2002 in the context of US politics), or in marital relations (as shown by Musolff 2011 in his analysis of how the German and British press frame the relationship between EU member states). However, in our data, evident family relations did not emerge at all as a possible conceptualization of Hungary and EU relations, despite their definite presence in political communication. One possible explanation might be the intention of FIDESZ (and the Hungarian government) to maintain a distance between Hungary and the EU (Brussels). Accordingly, Brussels is represented as an active agent through the CAPITAL FOR GOVERNMENT metonymy, but this personification is not extended to familial relations at all.

Following the discourse dynamics-based metaphor identification procedure, we were able to categorize the vast majority of the tokens along four distinct metaphorical scenarios that conceptualise Brussels as an AUTHORITY FIGURE, a PARTNER, a BULLY, and an OPPONENT IN A BATTLE. The distribution of the four major scenarios of the EU AS PERSON frame is depicted in Figure 2. As can be seen in the figure, all four identified metaphorical scenarios showed a relatively even trend in the investigated period. The most frequent scenario in our corpus was the AUTHORITY FIGURE, amounting to more than half of the data in each consecutive year (59% in 2015, 56% in 2016, and 49% in 2017).

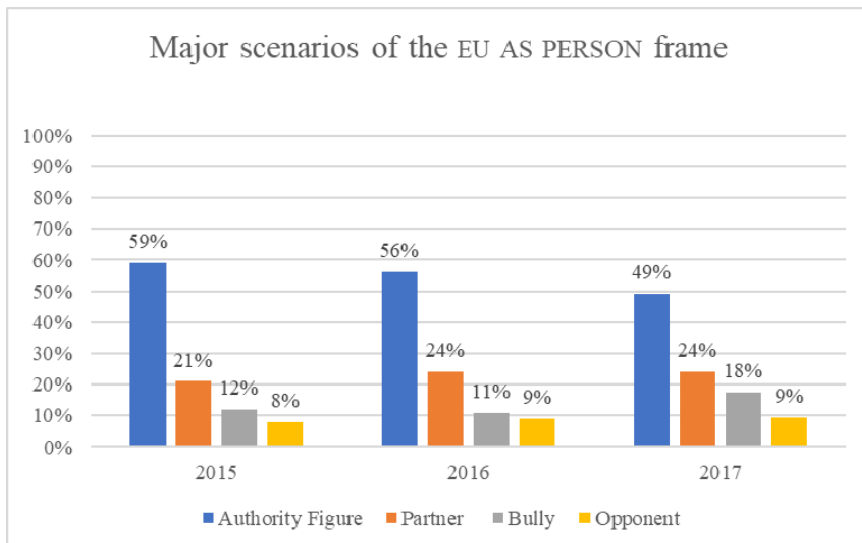


Figure 2. Distribution of identified metaphorical scenarios within the EU AS PERSON frame, 2015–2017



The PARTNER scenario accounted for approximately a quarter of the EU AS PERSON instantiations (21%, 24%, and 24%, respectively). The BULLY scenario appeared as the third most common manifestation of the EU AS PERSON frame (with 12%, 11%, and 18%, respectively). Quite surprisingly, and against our initial expectations, the OPPONENT IN A BATTLE scenario was the least frequently used narrative in government communication (accounting for less than ten per cent of the data within the EU AS PERSON frame in each investigated year).

At this point it might be argued that our main assumption concerning the conflict-obsessed political rhetoric of the current Hungarian populist government has *not* been confirmed by the above data. After all, only one of the metaphorical scenarios, OPPONENT IN A BATTLE, is explicitly and evidently based upon conflict (and a rather violent form of it). Yet, we wish to maintain that conflict is indeed a necessary and elementary feature of the political communication of the Hungarian government concerning Brussels. What we wish to show in the forthcoming sections is that it is present in all four identified narratives, but its intensity does vary from scenario to scenario. In the following sections we will discuss each scenario in more detail (in descending order of their overall frequency).

5.2. The *AUTHORITY FIGURE* scenario

The most frequent type of metaphorical scenario that emerged in our data conceptualized the European Union as an *AUTHORITY FIGURE*: as indicated in Figure 2, its ratio was 59% in 2015, 56% in 2016, and 49% in 2017. In this particular conceptualization the relationship between Hungary and the EU is based upon a hierarchical model, which assumes Brussels to be in the position of the decision maker. This model reflects the supranational principle in EU politics. Importantly, this arrangement does not imply that Brussels is an authoritarian figure. Brussels asserts its will and decisions on Hungary because it is entitled to do so, as it possesses *recognized* authority (Osorio-Kupferblum 2015). This aspect was expressed in the tokens by virtue of modals, such as *kell* ('must') – as in example (6):

- (6) *akkor arról tájékoztatni kell Brüsszelt* (2015)
then about inform.to must Brussels
'then [Hungary] must inform Brussels'

Further lexical items that we considered as activating the *AUTHORITY FIGURE* scenario included *szembe megy* ('to go against'), *eldönt* ('to decide'), *módosíthat* ('to modify'), *elvehet* ('to take away [a right]'), *beleszól* ('to intervene'), *hozzájárul* ('to consent'), etc., as in example (7):



- (7) *Megjegyezte: a Déli Áramlat gázvezetékét ugyan* (2016)
 remarked.he the South Stream gas.pipeline though
Brüsszel egyelőre megvétózta, de mindkét ország érdeke,
 Brussels temporarily vetoed but both country interest.of
hogy előbb-utóbb meglegyen a vezetékek.
 that sooner.or.later be.finished the pipeline
 ‘He remarked: the South Stream gas pipeline was vetoed by Brussels for the moment but it is in the interest of both countries to finish the pipeline sooner or later’

Since the European Union is bestowed with certain rights, under the AUTHORITY capacity there is no coercion or force involved. Nevertheless, Brussels (in its capacity as an authority) can punish Hungary, when it deems this to be necessary. Example (8) illustrates this particular case:

- (8) *Brüsszel kötelezettségszegési eljárást indít majd* (2017)
 Brussels infringement procedure launch then
 ‘Brussels will launch an infringement procedure’

Under the AUTHORITY scenario, conflict between the EU and Hungary can arise due to the EU’s higher position in the hierarchy, i.e., that it has the right to control (and even decide in) certain issues affecting Hungary. As it is shown in example (7), the fact that Brussels has such a level of authority allows it to block certain initiatives of the member states. Yet another aspect that may lead to discord is related to the EU’s assumed lack of competence to fulfil its responsibilities; our corpus returned a number of hits where Brussels was criticized for not protecting the European people from “illegal migrants” and that it is Brussel’s “failure” that the United Kingdom left the European Union. The reference to Brussel’s incompetence is exemplified in (9):

- (9) *Brüsszel nem képes megszervezni Európa védelmét, de* (2016)
 Brussels not capable organize.to Europe defence, but
ennél is nagyobb baj hogy a szándék is
 even also bigger problem that the intention also
hiányzik belőle
 missing from.it
 ‘Brussels is not capable of organizing Europe’s defence, but it is a bigger problem that it does not even have the intention to do so’

Thus, based on the AUTHORITY scenario, conflict is based on two issues: Brussels’



higher position in the hierarchy and its incompetence to perform its tasks and duties.

5.3. The PARTNER scenario

The PARTNER IN A JOINT VENTURE scenario is based upon an egalitarian model. Here, Hungary and the European Union are conceptualised as partners with equal rights and mutual obligations, bringing into focus the intergovernmental principle of the European Union (as opposed to the supranational principle that is emphasized by the AUTHORITY scenario). Accordingly, in most of the examples that fell into this category, Hungary and the EU were conceptualized as partners in a discussion (or argument), and both parties were able to express their views and interests – even if these conflicted. In other words, the CONFLICT frame emerged very subtly, in the form of debates and/or arguments, as in example (10):

- (10) *megkezdődött a vita Brüsszel és Magyarország között* (2016)
started the debate Brussels and Hungary between
'the debate has started between Brussels and Hungary'

Lexical items that – in our view – prompted for such a scenario included *vita* ('argument'), *vitában áll* ('to be in an argument'), *mond* ('to say'), *elmagyaráz* ('to explain'), *javasol* ('to suggest'), *álláspontot elfogad* ('to accept a position'), *nem ért egyet* ('to disagree'), *véleményt képvisel* ('to represent an opinion'), *ellentmond* ('to contradict'), etc. – as illustrated in examples (11–13).

- (11) *Most várjuk, hogy mi fog történni, Brüsszel* (2015)
now wait.we that what will happen.to Brussels
összehív-e újabb tanácskozást
convene.if newer council
'Now, we are waiting for what will happen, whether Brussels will convene a new council...'
- (12) *Brüsszel hivatalos javaslata* (2016)
Brussels official proposal.of
'Brussels's official proposal'
- (13) *kell egy értelmes munkamegosztást kialakítani* (2017)
must one reasonable division.of.labour establish.to
Brüsszel és a nemzetállamok között
Brussels and the nation-states between



‘a reasonable division of labour must be established between Brussels and nation states’

Examples (10–13) demonstrate that within the PARTNER scenario (as compared to the above discussed AUTHORITY scenario) the two parties, i.e., the European Union and Hungary are not in a hierarchical relationship, since Brussels and Hungary can debate issues in the respective bodies of the EU. Thus, Brussels can make recommendations to the member states – which is a far less radical intervention in policymaking as compared to vetoing (see example 7). Nevertheless, as reflected in example (13), the “division of labour” is not clarified in every single case, which can lead to discord. Thus, similarly to the AUTHORITY scenario, conflict emerges from the nature of the partnership itself: in a “business relationship” certain issues must be discussed, and – inevitably – conflicting interests collide.

As reflected in Figure 2, the number of tokens reflecting the egalitarian model has shown a slight increase over the course of the investigated period. While only 21% of the tokens within the EU AS PERSON frame activated the egalitarian model in 2015, their ratio increased to 24% in 2016 and in 2017. It is not within the bounds of the present paper to hypothesize about the possible reasons behind this overall increase; nevertheless, some observations on the basis of the data can be drawn. Any such change in the ratio of the PARTNER scenario needs to take into account the ratio of the other scenarios. It is also evident from Figure 2 that over the investigated period the AUTHORITY FIGURE scenario decreased, from 59% in 2015 to 49% in 2017, which might signify a less confrontative and more collaborative relationship in 2017 as compared to 2015.¹¹ However, any such implication might also be a result of the nature of the database that we used – the official websites that we used for data collection (which also have an English version) might choose to focus on the collaborative nature of Hungary’s relations with the EU (thus promoting the success of the government), instead of highlighting evident conflict and discord.

5.4. *The BULLY scenario*

The EU AS BULLY scenario emerged as the third most common narrative in the government’s communication about the EU. This scenario is based upon a totalitarian model, according to which the EU is regarded as an authoritarian figure that threatens Hungary’s wellbeing and curbs the country’s essential rights. In this respect, this scenario can also be regarded as a less subtle manifestation of the CONFLICT

¹¹ Due to the small sample size, no firm conclusion can be drawn with respect to the statistical significance of these differences.



frame; by conceptualizing the EU as a bully, the Hungarian government can frame the country as a victim who has been subject to unlawful aggression. While both the AUTHORITY FIGURE and the BULLY scenario are somewhat similar in the sense that both assume a hierarchical relationship between the EU and Hungary, there is nevertheless one crucial difference between them: in the case of the BULLY narrative, the EU possesses the power (and also uses this power) to make its members do things they would otherwise not be willing to do.

We considered tokens containing lexical items such as *betilt* ('to prohibit'), *erőltet* ('to force'), *kényszerít* ('to coerce'), *elvesz* ('to take away'), *fényeget* ('to threaten'), etc. to activate the BULLY scenario, as illustrated in examples (14) and (15):

- (14) *kritizáljuk azt az új bevándorlási szabályozást,* (2015)
criticise.we that the new immigration regulation
amelyet Brüsszel próbál ráerőltetni Magyarországra
which Brussels try force.upon.to Hungary.on
és a többi országra
and the other countries.on
'we criticize the new immigration regulation, which Brussels is trying
force upon Hungary and the other countries'
- (15) *Nem hagyhatjuk,hogy Brüsszel a törvények fölé* (2016)
no let.can.us that Brussels the laws above
helyezze magát
place itself
'We cannot let Brussels place itself above the law'

Examples (14–15) demonstrate the cases when – according to the governmental communication – the EU attempted to “cross the line” and abuse its authority by placing itself “above the law.” Moreover, example (14) suggests that Brussels does not refrain from “forcing” its will upon the member states.

Generally, and as depicted in Figure 2, the percentage of the BULLY scenario exhibited an irregular (though relatively low) trend, with 12% in 2015, 11% in 2016, and 18% in 2017. It is beyond the scope of the present paper to put forth any conclusions as to *why* the BULLY scenario showed such irregularities, but on closer inspection it can be safely stated that the BULLY scenario was restricted to nearly exclusively those tokens where the topic was (im)migration. Thus, the erratic nature of this particular scenario might simply be a reflection of the thematization of is-



sues on the government websites (i.e., there were less (im)migration-themed articles in 2015 and 2016 as compared to 2017). Yet definite conclusions could only be drawn by analysing *all* the articles that were published on the websites during the investigated period (which was not within the scope of the present research) and by having an adequately large sample size that allows testing for statistical significance.

5.5. The *OPPONENT* scenario

Given the dominance of the WAR frame in political communication on the one hand, and Hungary's tumultuous relationship with the EU on the other hand, we initially assumed (and hypothesized) at the start of this research that the Hungarian government's rhetoric concerning the EU would also heavily draw on the source domain of WAR, implying that the EU would be conceptualized as an enemy or opponent in a battle. Yet, as the results in Figure 2 indicate, the preponderance of such tokens was relatively low – even though they remained at a very even level of between eight and nine per cent in each investigated year (8%, 9%, and 9%, respectively). In this particular conceptualization, the EU is evidently and straightforwardly conceptualized as an opponent in a military operation. Lexical items within the tokens that indicated this particular framing included *megtámad* ('to attack'), *ellenáll* ('to resist'), *támadás* ('attack'), *csata* ('battle'), *küzdelem* ('fight') and *frontot nyit* ('to open a front'), as illustrated with examples (16–17):

- (16) *nem mi akarjuk megváltoztatni a mostani rendszert,* (2016)
not we want.we change.to the current system

hanem Brüsszel, tehát ők kinyitottak egy frontot, és
but Brussels thus they opened a front and

nincs mese, fel kell venni a vértjeinket meg a
there.is.no tale on must put.to the armor.our and the

sisakot

helmet

'it is Brussels, who wants to change the current system, not us; thus, they opened a front, so the time is up: we must put on our armours and the helmet'

- (17) *Vállalja-e a küzdelmet Brüsszellel szemben?* (2017)
accept.if the fight Brussels.with against
'Will it [Hungary] accept the fight against Brussels'



In all of these examples that we identified as belonging to the EU AS OPPONENT IN A BATTLE scenario, Brussels or the EU was regarded unequivocally as an enemy in a battle,¹² and Hungary was actually taking part in a battle or fight against this opponent. In this particular scenario, the focus is on violent military conflict. Examples (16–17) might indicate that it was relatively straightforward to identify and classify tokens as belonging to this particular narrative. This, however, was not exactly the case. Needless to say, the source domain of WAR is also often applied to the target domain of ARGUMENT (cf. Lakoff & Johnson 2003), and there were a few tokens in our corpus where it was difficult to maintain a difference between the EU AS AN OPPONENT IN AN ARGUMENT or the EU AS AN OPPONENT IN A BATTLE. In other words, the argument (or conflict) with the EU was metaphorically understood as a battle (or war), as exemplified by (18):

- (18) *Mintha a „van-e jogunk a saját döntésünkhöz* (2016)
As.if the have.if right the own decision.to
vítát” vívnánk Brüsszellel is
debate fight.would Brussels.with too
‘As if we were fighting the ‘do we have a right to decide for ourselves argument’ with Brussels too’¹³

However, the focus of the present research is on *how the EU (Brussels) is conceptualized*, and not how arguments are metaphorically understood. Thus, we eventually decided to classify tokens that contained the lexical item *vita* (‘argument’) or *vitázik* (‘to argue’) as belonging under the PARTNER scenario, even if there were hints of the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor in the token (as in the case of example 18) – on account of the fact that arguments can only be “fought” with people, even if the nature of this argument draws on the image of a battle or fight.

What the trends analysed above indicate is that it is on the *scenario* level – and not the frame level – that a couple of observations can be drawn regarding the present research. First and foremost, our assumption that governmental communication would be primarily based on the CONFLICT frame in the form of violent military operation (i.e., war), in which case the EU is conceptualized as an opponent in a battle, was not confirmed, as the OPPONENT IN BATTLE scenario was the least fre-

¹² Such a conceptualization can also be analyzed as being metonymical in the sense that Brussels as an enemy is a whole standing for the parts (i.e., the soldiers), in which case the soldiers are the bureaucrats and/or politicians in the organization as such.

¹³ Note that the expression *vitát vív* (‘fight an argument’) is very unconventional in Hungarian, questioning to some degree the validity of the token itself.



quent narrative in every single year that we analysed. It was, in fact, the EU AS AUTHORITY FIGURE conceptualization, based on a hierarchical model, that emerged as the most frequent scenario, accounting for more than 50% of the data. Such a hierarchical relationship does not come without its conflicts – as demonstrated by the examples, discord in this particular scenario could be traced either to Hungary’s resistance to EU authority (i.e., a clash of interests between the parties) or to the EU’s perceived lack of competence to safeguard the wellbeing of the member states. This particular point brings us to our second observation: the conflictual nature of all the four scenarios that we identified. Conflict manifested itself in the scenarios to varying degrees – quite explicitly and straightforwardly in the case of the OPPOSITION IN A BATTLE and the BULLY scenarios, and in more subtle terms in the AUTHORITY FIGURE and the PARTNER scenarios.

This brings us to our third observation with regard to the results of the study. In the context of politics, the NATION AS PERSON metaphor has been typically linked with models that originate in either parent–child relations (as discussed by Lakoff 2002 in the context of US politics), or in marital relations (as shown by Musolff 2011). However, in our data, evident family relations did not emerge at all as a possible conceptualization of Hungary and EU relations, indicating the intention of FIDESZ (and the Hungarian government) to signal Hungary’s estrangement with the EU. Such a discourse promotes the “anti-imperialist rhetoric” (Csehi & Zigut 2020: 2) of Hungary’s prime minister, Viktor Orbán, to portray the EU as an “imperial power” (Csehi & Zigut 2020: 2) that is controlled by the corrupt elite – and thus is naturally in conflict with the general will of the people.

6. Conclusion

The aim of our research was to investigate how the Government of Hungary framed its relationship with the European Union within the rather turbulent period of 2015–2017. Building on the assumption that conflict is a staple element of political communication in general and populist discourse in particular, we hypothesized that EU–Hungary tensions would manifest themselves in the communication of the Hungarian government via direct and explicit reference to the CONFLICT frame, more specifically in the form of a violent conflict, i.e., war.

Drawing on a discourse dynamics approach to metaphor identification (Cameron et al. 2009, 2010), we analysed the metaphorical framing of the term *Brüsszel* (‘Brussels’) found in articles published on the government’s and the Prime Minister’s official websites between 2015 and 2017. According to our results, the vast



majority (approx. 90%) of the examples were based upon the EU AS PERSON conceptualization. This, in itself, is by no means particularly surprising, as political communication often relies on the use of metaphors that conceptualise a political entity, such as a nation, as a person (see Stanojević & Šarić 2019). This particular frame, however, manifested itself in the examples via four scenarios: AUTHORITY FIGURE, PARTNER, BULLY and OPPONENT IN A BATTLE, all of which showed relatively even distributions in all three investigated years.

Counter to our initial expectations, the OPPONENT IN BATTLE scenario was the least frequent narrative in every single year that we analysed; instead, the EU AS AUTHORITY FIGURE conceptualization, based on a hierarchical model, emerged as the most frequent scenario. Nevertheless, conflict was present in every single scenario, although to varying degrees (quite explicitly in the case of the OPPONENT IN A BATTLE and the BULLY scenarios, and in more subtle terms in the AUTHORITY FIGURE and the PARTNER scenarios). Our data indicate that the term *Brüsszel* has become a convenient shorthand in Hungarian government communication for conceptualizing the European Union as a somewhat difficult and authoritative individual with whom conflict is inherent – with varying degrees – at all times.

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**BRUXELLES – ŠEF, NASILNIK ILI VELIKI BRAT?
UOKVIRIVANJE SUKOB A U SUVREMENOJ MAĐARSKOJ POLITIČKOJ RETORICI**

Gledano iz perspektive političkog realizma, sukob je osobina svojstvena svjetskoj politici (Morgenthau 1948/1973). Polazeći od ove osnovne premise, može se očekivati da političari rutinski koriste okvir SUKOB A kako bi objasnili i opravdali svoju vanjsku politiku (Musolff 2016). Sukob je osobito raširen u populističkim narativima, gdje se „čisti ljudi“ uspoređuju s „korumpiranom elitom“ (Mudde 2004). U skladu s navedenim, pretpostavili smo da će aktualna mađarska populistička vlada svoj turbulentni odnos s EU-om isto tako oblikovati metaforički, konceptualizirajući ga kao nasilni sukob. Oslanjajući se na pristup diskursne dinamike u identificiranju metafora (Cameron et al. 2009; 2010), analizirali smo metaforičko uokvirivanje pojma *Brüsszel* („Bruxelles“) pronađeno u člancima objavljenim na službenim web stranicama mađarske vlade u razdoblju između 2015. i 2017. Naši rezultati ukazuju na to da je eksplicitno jezično ostvarenje okvira OSUKOB A u obliku nasilnog sukoba (poput vojne operacije) u suvremenoj vladinoj retorici manje rašireno, za razliku od okvira EU KAO OSOBA. Ova potonja konceptualizacija, međutim, ostvaruje se kroz metaforičke scenarije koji evociraju konfliktno odnose različitih stupnjeva intenziteta (i tako nadograđuju populistički narativ) prikazujući EU kao autoritarnu figuru, partnera u zajedničkom pot-hvatu, nasilnika i protivnika u bitci.

Ključne riječi: politička retorika; Mađarska; scenarij; SUKOB; okvir; Bruxelles; Europska unija; personifikacija, EU KAO OSOBA.